



LAND OWNERS WORRIED

Development of oil sands slated for Whiterocks Canyon?

Susan ✓
Paul ✓
Utah
county
general

By Lezlee E. Whiting

The private property owners in Whiterocks Canyon are about as different as the unique flora and fauna that grows on their forested lands 27 miles north of Roosevelt, but they have found common ground in their protest of plans by a Las Vegas-based energy company to strip mine the canyon's rich oil sands deposits.

Last month Black Sands Holding Company sent notification letters to land owners outlining their plans to exercise the mineral lease rights they have purchased from the privately held Whiterocks Energy LLC.

According to Alan Propp, senior engineer for Black Sands, the first item on their agenda will be to conduct core drilling on the private mineral leases after obtaining the proper permitting from the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. Black Sands was

Black Sands Energy is a young company with no track record to support their claims.

formed two and a-half years ago, company CEO is Frank Ginton, who resides in Boulder, Colo.

According to one Web site, Black Sands Energy Corp. is a joint venture partner with Nevada Capital Management Corp. Korean investors are financing their exploratory work in Whiterocks Canyon and other sites to produce oil from oil sands to the tune of \$29 million.

There have been rumors for decades that exploration for the rich oil sands deposits in

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THE FALLEN

ee to place a marker honoring her husband, Kevin Orr, during lege's Miller Campus in Sandy last Thursday. Orr, a detective ries suffered in a helicopter crash in November 2006 during presented with her husband's Purple Heart by Uintah County

Rehearing requested in monument battle

ASKING FOR JUDGES TO 'LISTEN 'EN BANC'

By Lezlee E. Whiting

The law firm representing Duchesne City in their 4-year-old legal battle to prevent a religious sect from erecting a monument in Roy Park, has filed for a rehearing before the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver.

Edward White III, chief counsel for Duchesne City, petitioned May 1, to have the appellate court's April decision heard "en

ment monument in the park, but the small plot of land it sits on is no longer owned by the city.

White, who is with the Thomas More Law Center in Michigan, represents both Duchesne City and Pleasant Grove in Utah County, which has similar issues surrounding a Ten Commandment monument in one of their parks.

The Cole family donated the Ten Commandment monument

od for lease

COMMENT PERIOD IS NEXT

nterior for Land and Minerals Management.

"This RD&D project along with the five other oil shale projects in Colorado will allow is to test our belief that we have he knowledge and expertise to develop this resource effectively,

White River Mine will give us a better understanding of how to produce oil from shale rock in a manner that is both economically promising and environmentally sound," said Selma Sierra, BLM Utah state director. "With the continuing cooperation of the

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OIL SANDS
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canyon were imminent. So far nothing has ever materialized except for the rather benign core drilling that has gone on from time to time. However with oil prices at around \$62 a barrel and rising, those who want to protect the canyon from an intrusion of wide scale mineral extraction are organizing and examining their options.

Black Sands "notice of intent to explore has been overwhelmingly met with shock and great alarm," Tammy Bostick-Cooper wrote in a nearly three page letter to state and local officials. Concerns addressed in the letter from the Whiterocks Property Owners Association, include everything from environment to aesthetics, economic and legal issues.

Uintah County commissioners have heard nothing of the plans of Nevta/Black Sands and have invited members of the property owners association to meet with them, said commissioner Darlene Burns.

Bostick-Cooper and her husband Lewis are one of three property owners who live in the canyon year-round. They moved there seven years ago to live "off the grid ... gently on the land" on their 20 acres. Like many private property owners in the canyon their land is surrounded by Ashley National Forest in an area zoned recreation, forestry and mining.

Bostick-Cooper, who grew up

on a ranch in Neola, said she isn't about cart blanche protests when it comes to energy development, but does want to ensure it is done right.

"We are not against oil exploration, we are for environmentally sustainable and environmentally sound exploration," she said. "We all put gas in our cars and until that changes, let us do it responsibly."

Nevta/Black Sands Energy boasts that the company's "patented, closed-loop production process" can do just that by economically extracting oil from oil sands without the extensive use of water.

"The joint venture's process utilizes benign, non-toxic solvents which are recycled in a closed-loop system so that both cost and environmental impact issues are met," according to the letter Propp has sent to property owners.

According to Propp, direct mining and extraction processing costs hover between \$12 to \$13 per barrel. However, it could be awhile before extraction begins. He said the company has the pre-commercial version of the technology using their multi-pod production units and will be putting together the commercial version, which is undergoing "some modifications."

"The beauty of our system is that it can be deployed fairly easy on a small scale. Our process is small and modular," he said.

Black Sands plans to put into production 10,000 barrels per day to begin and stay with the extraction project for five to 10 years. In the letter to property owners, he said the company's production process is not only low-cost and low-energy, but also "low-emission, low-manpower, earth friendly, easy-to-operate and leaves a small footprint and rapid payout."

Those with surface rights should know that Black Sands Energy will be a "good neighbor," said Propp, and will reclaim all the land that is disturbed "under all applicable regulations."

Because the young company has no track record to support their claims, Propp said that canyon private property owners will just have to trust Black Sands.

"They won't know it until we get out and prove what kind of guys we are," he said. "Unfortunately to some extent they will have to take our word that we are going to be good caretakers with the land."

Bostick-Cooper said the ramifications of a project that would mine oil sands in the canyon are immense and practically immeasurable. The greatest concern, however, lies with the water table disruption and possible contamination.

"There are these little loop-holes ... if you do these very small areas or refining they never have to have an environmental study," Bostick-Cooper has discovered.

Propp confirmed that. "You can disturb up to five acres without being regulated by Environmental Assessment requirements," he said, adding that operations would eventually expand to the point where the company "would be required to identify and account for any environmental problems that would arise."

Matt Cazier, director of Planning and Zoning for Uintah County, said as far as he knows his office has not been contacted by Nevta/Black Sands for any regulatory permits.

"If it was," said Cazier, "all of those property owners within 1,000 feet would have been notified."

Propp said he doesn't believe that rules require Black Sands to obtain permits from Uintah County.

Bostick-Cooper said despite assurances through Propp's letter, questions remain. She said she is pleased about one thing - the proposed mineral extraction has brought the canyon's private property owners together as a cohesive unit to protect their lands.

"While we have this on the table let's do something that will protect it (the canyon) forever ... all the land owners are very different ... and they have all come together, different political philosophies have come together to say "not here, not in Whiterocks Canyon," said Bostick-Cooper, "it's very heartening."

CLEAN UP
Continued from page 1

parents' home in Myton for a few days to allow his son's lungs to heal. He said during the stay at his grandparents' home Greysen had no symptoms of asthma.

"The odor that comes off (the dirt pile) is just unbearable," Monks said. "It burns your eyes and it smells terrible. We're concerned that whatever is evaporating off of there is causing problems with the air quality."

El Paso company official: Tuesday that the contamir soil they are cleaning up is of a "flare pit" - an ear basin used to collect and b off byproducts of oil and production. The pit, which Paso never used, is located compressor station acquire a 2001 merger with anothe and gas company. El Paso ha its remediation efforts Satu after the reports surfaced nearby residents were becon ill.

"Our desire is to make s that the area is safe and that public is not harmed in any v that's why we suspended [cleanup]," said El Paso spol man Richard Wheatley.

Monks said he's concern not only about what's n the that's making his family s others sick, but the possibi that groundwater in the a may be contaminated. The w that provides the Monks far with water is only 40 feet de El Paso has already dug at le 20 feet down, according to pub health officials, and is still findi contamination.

"We drink bottled water. Monks said. "We haven't drun our tap water for a year now."

Janet Panas can see the Paso site from the back por of the home she's lived in sin 1990. Panas had to take her year-old grandson Atticus Pana who also has a history of asthma to the emergency room in respir tory distress on Friday. Doctors were able to stabilize the bc without hospitalizing him, bu Panas said she's tired of feelin ill all the time and having th smell of natural gas saturatin her home almost daily.

"I love where I live, I'm jus get sick of dealing with the stuf we're dealing with," Panas said "I just wish they would have been open and up front with us about this from the beginning instea of being so secretive."

Jim Springer, spokesman for the state Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, said the agency approved El Paso's remediation plan before issuing a permit for the cleanup. He said the division will now wait for findings from environmental health officials before allowing any future work at the site.

"What's being done on site there is pretty common to other sites," Springer said of the cleanup, "so what might be happening there, we're really at a loss to say. We'll just have to wait for the report."

BATTLE